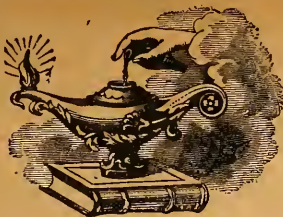


No. 2.



BIOGRAPHICAL
SERIES

STORY OF
ABRAHAM
LINCOLN

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STORY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

The Lincolns came from England. Samuel was the first one who lived in America. He came to Massachusetts in 1637.

From Massachusetts his sons and grandsons moved to New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia. They were strong, hardy men, who loved liberty and did not fear work or hardships.

One of them was called Abraham Lincoln, and he was the grandfather of our Abraham Lincoln. He moved to Kentucky from Virginia in 1780. That was a long time ago!

A great many people moved to Kentucky at that time. Daniel Boone urged his Virginia friends to go there. He told them thrilling stories of the rich and beautiful lands west of the Blue Mountains. Kentucky was then a part of Virginia.

Abraham Lincoln was a rich man; he owned much land in Virginia, but he sold his farm there and bought three farms in Kentucky. He then took his wife and five children, three boys and two girls, on the long journey over the mountains to their new

home. Most of them rode on horseback ; the girls too, for in those days girls lived out of doors a great deal and were as hardy as their brothers.

All were brave and bold and were eager to go to the wonderful land over the mountains. It was a fine time for the boys ! There were great woods, wide rivers, and high hills on the way. Thomas, the youngest boy, six years old, had a grand time all the way.

The whole of Kentucky was than a vast forest. Indians lived there, who roamed through the forest hunting. They killed bears, wolves, deer, raccoons and squirrels for a living.

The woods were alive with birds, the streams with fish and the ponds alive with ducks. The Indians had fine times hunting and fishing. They led an easy and lazy life, and were very angry because the white men cut down the trees, cleared the fields, and drove away the game. So they killed a great many of the white people.

It was into this forest that Abraham Lincoln brought his family. They settled at Hughes Station, on Floydes Creek.

The Indians were lurking about, so the white people built their houses close together. They built them on the four sides of an open field, called a court, and made the doors and windows on the inside toward the court. When the gate into the court was shut, the Indians could not get in.

The house made a sort of fort which they called a stockade. For a long time the white people lived in stockades. The children had fine times playing together in this big play-ground.

The cows, horses, and carts were put in it at night. The men worked the farms by day and came to the stockade for the night.

Abraham Lincoln and his boys, with great spirit, worked the new farm. They cleared away the woods and planted corn. They raised calves and colts. Soon the new farm began to look thrifty like the old one in Virginia.

All went well for two years. Then one day, while they were at work on the farm, a sly Indian shot Abraham Lincoln. The Indian, as he lay hidden in a clump of bushes by the side of the field, had watched Lincoln for a long time.

Lincoln's rifle stood by a stump in the field, for they always carried a gun with them to their work. The oldest boy ran for the rifle, and the next boy ran to the stockade to alarm the people. The Indian seized little Thomas and started to carry him off.

The oldest brother could shoot as well as the Indian. He shot and the Indian fell. Little Thomas ran to the stockade.

Abraham Lincoln's death was a sad blow. It broke up the family. The hardest lot fell to little Thomas, who was a lad of only eight years, but he had to begin to take care of himself.

At first he did all kinds of farm work, but in a few years he began to work at the carpenter's trade. This was a poor trade then as most of the houses were log cabins. The doors often only bear-skins hung up and the windows, if there were any, were oiled paper. In many pioneer huts the floor was the ground.

Thomas Lincoln worked hard to get a poor living. It is doubtful if he ever went to school a day in his life. Many other boys did not. There were few schools in Kentucky then and the terms were short, the teachers poor and the school-books scarce.

Thomas Lincoln learned to write his name, but he never could write much more. He learned to read a little, but he never could read very well, and it is said that he had to spell nearly every word. Many people in that new country could read no better than he.

When Thomas Lincoln was twenty-eight years old, he married Nancy Hanks. She could write and read well, and she tried to teach him to read. But it was very hard work. He was sorry that he could not read and write well, as it kept him back all his life. Ignorant people never get on very well.

By and by, on February 12th, 1809, a baby boy was born in Thomas Lincoln's home. He was a fine little fellow. A real sun-beam in the house! They named him Abraham, after his grandfather whom the Indian had shot. They loved the name.

His father meant his little Abe should learn to read and write and be a fine scholar. But the carpenter's business was poor and the schools few and costly. So Abe did not go to school a whole year before he was eight years old, and he went but little afterward.

Abe's mother was his best teacher. She had no children's books, but she made letters and words on pieces of paper and on shingles and taught little Abe to read them. She also taught him from the Bible. He learned easily and could read almost as soon as he could walk. They were very proud of the baby's reading.

As he grew older he was very eager to learn, and would stick to a book when other boys were at play. He read all the books there were in the house and then borrowed all in the neighborhood.

He gathered dry spice-wood branches and burned them, as candles to read by. He borrowed an old arithmetic and copied its rules and sums on bits of paper. That was the only arithmetic he ever owned.

Abe had a sister Sarah two years older than he. A little brother had died.

His mother often read to Abe and his sister and told them Bible stories. She read them the wonderful story of Bunyan's Pilgrim. It was a real journey to Abe. He thought it was like his father's journey, when he was a boy, from Virginia over the Blue Ridge into Kentucky.

When Nancy Lincoln had read all the books she had, she told them her own stories. She was a great story-teller. The children used to sit at her feet for hours and listen to them. No one else could tell such fine stories.

Frontier life was full of adventures, and Nancy Lincoln thrilled the children's hearts with stories of the wild scenes of those days. They sat spell-bound while the stories lasted.

Every neighborhood had its tale of some wild adventure with Indians, bears, or wolves. These were common events. The Lincolns had a tale that never lost its interest. "Mamma, tell how the Indian shot Grandpa," was an oft-repeated request. That story thrilled the heart of the boy and prolonged the story-telling hour.

Abe learned to love stories and learned from his father and mother the love and skill of story-telling. They had no daily newspapers and very few books, so telling stories took their place.

But Thomas Lincoln's business did not thrive. He had moved once when Abe was four years old, and he must move again. He felt the pioneer restlessness. His brother had settled in Indiana on the big, blue river. Stories of the rich lands and easy living there came to Thomas Lincoln and he grew more restless. Then, too, he did not like the slavery in Kentucky, for he believed slavery to be wrong. He thought Indiana would be a better state to live

in; so he built a flat boat, put in some of his goods and started to see the new country. He sailed down the rolling fork, down the Salt River for a time, and then down the Ohio. It was easy going down stream; but his boat struck a snag and upset him and his goods into the water. He had a great time getting out; the boat was lost with most of his goods. He was in Indiana but easy times were not there.

He left what goods he had saved near the river, and hunted for a good place to live.

He was gone a long time, and Nancy Lincoln and the children were in great straits while he was away. Often they had not enough to eat. Nancy Lincoln knew how to handle a gun and sometimes went to the woods and tried to shoot wild turkeys; sometimes she looked for wild ducks around the ponds. Abe trapped rabbits and shot squirrels and birds. He cried the first bird he shot; but the times were very hard.

At length the father came back, but he brought a sad story of shipwreck and loss. Still he thought they could live better and more easily in Indiana. He said the soil was rich, the land rolling, the trees tall and the country beautiful. So they were glad to go. They went most of the way on horseback, for the roads were only forest paths.

The children had a grand time! Everything was new. Abe was delighted with the woods, the birds, the saucy squirrels and the wide wonderful river.

For Nancy Lincoln, the journey was a hard and sad one; she had left old friends and a dear little grave in Kentucky.

At length they reached the place where Thomas Lincoln had left the goods. They took these and started into the forest.

For fifteen miles they picked their way, or cut a path through thickets. After some time they found an opening on a hillside which they thought a good place for a house. They believed they would have a happy home there.

It was late in the fall and the cool winds began to whistle and bite.

Thomas Lincoln was full of energy and his ax rang on the trunks of the trees. Abe was eight years old, brave and stout, and his ax rang on the boughs of the trees and on the bushes.

By hard work they built a hut on the hillside before winter. The chimney, built of sticks and mud, was in one corner, and a bearskin was the door.

It was a rude house, like a hunter's camp; but Thomas Lincoln said, "We can keep warm here, and we will have a better house some day."

Food was scarce. They had raised no corn that year. The neighbors were miles away and as poor as the Lincolns.

Times were hard and they were often hungry; sometimes they had bear's meat and sometimes deer's meat. Sometimes they had "corn-dodgers" and

sometimes potatoes. Sometimes a rabbit or squirrel, and sometimes none of them.

These were pinching times; cold pinched and hunger pinched. And they pinched the poor hard-working mother hardest.

The next year Thomas Lincoln built a new house, and made it like the old one in Kentucky. He and Abe cut logs the same length and notched them near the ends to make them fit nicely over each other. Then they had a "Bee" and invited all the neighbors for miles around to help them raise the house. They called it a "Bee" because all the workers were as busy as bees.

The women and children planned for it for weeks. There were no meetings and no schools there then, so the people rarely met together. They came from all quarters to the "Bee." It was a merry time!

The men at the word "Heave-away!" rolled up the logs and raised the house. They put up long poles for rafters and pinned them together with wooden pins. They split and shaved oak staves for shingles and fastened them on with pole-binders, held down by withes. There was not a nail in the house. They cut openings for the door and windows. The log cabin went up in an afternoon with joy and fun. The women had not met in months, and they had all the news of the neighborhood to tell.

They roasted sirloins of bear and deer and baked piles of "corn-dodgers."

The children ran and frolicked in great glee as they watched the logs go up.

When the cabin was done, they had a wild woods feast, with pioneer appetites. They told stories and sang songs and went home late at night on foot, or in ox carts, as happy as princes.

The new Lincoln house was only a log hut, but they were glad and proud of it. There was no better house for miles around.

Thomas Lincoln made the furniture. There was a bedstead made of poles, driven into the logs of the cabin; there was a plain pine table and stools; plates of wood, and a few of pewter; knives and forks; a bucket, a dutch oven and a "gritter." The "gritter" was made of old tin, punched full of holes and fastened on a board. With this they grated the corn. If the corn was green, it made royal bread for a hungry boy.

The beds were made of boughs, leaves and dry grass. Abe climbed to his little bed in the loft on wooden pins driven into the logs.

Abe's clothes were not like those that boys wear now. They were pioneer in style and make. His trousers and shoes were made of deer-skin roughly tanned. His shirt was a blouse of linsey-woolsey and his cap was made of coon-skin. They were all made by his mother, but no boy in the region was better clothed. Abe was happy and contented. But Nancy Lincoln was neither contented nor happy; she felt

the hardships and loneliness of the great forest and became thin and weak. She was sick in mind and body. With the warm weather of spring, fevers came; malaria was in the swamps and sluggish streams. She had no doctor and her only medicine was bitter barks, which they peeled from the trees, or roots which they dug in the swamp.

The poor mother grew weaker and lost courage; she talked to little Abe in a sad tone, he was her favorite, but in a little while she ceased to talk. Abe's mother was dead; the light of the house had gone out.

The little boy's home was empty; his teacher was gone. His sister Sarah was now the only house-keeper and the cooking was poor and the food scanty.

Their clothes grew old and ragged and life was sad and hard. These times lasted for more than a year after the mother's death.

Then Thomas Lincoln went back to Kentucky and returned with a new wife. New furniture came with her; but the best furnishing she brought was a new spirit and life. A spirit of thrift and neatness came with her into the lonely cabin. The new dishes, chairs, bureau and beds which she brought filled Abe and Sarah with wonder. They had never seen such fine furniture. But best of all was the tact, hope and cheery voice of the new mother.

The life of the cabin changed at once, a door was hung in the place of the old bearskin and oiled paper was put in the windows.

Abe was ten years old, large and strong, and he was kept busy. His ax rang in the woods; he drove the oxen, held the shovel-plow, shelled corn and carried the grist to the mill. He was a smart boy at all kinds of work.

The new mother had three children of her own, and she said they must all go to school. Then came a few school days for Abe. He was eager to learn, and led his class. The teacher saw he was in earnest and helped him. These were happy days for Abe, but they were few.

He could earn twenty-five cents a day, and his father hired him out to the neighbors. Then school days were over, but Abe's eagerness to learn was not over.

He carried a book in his pocket and when the team stopped to rest, he was on the fence or a stump with his book.

He picked out fine passages to copy, and read them to his mother. He made speeches to the birds in the cornfield and to the boys at the village store. He was the best story-teller among the evening loungers there.

He wrote on bits of paper and on shingles, and covered the logs of the house with quotations.

He ciphered on the back of the wooden fire-shovel with a burnt stick, and cleared his slate, when full, with his father's jack-plane.

He read all sorts of books. He would walk miles to get a book. He said that he borrowed all he could find for fifty miles around.

One book he kept in a crack between the logs of the house at the head of his bed. He would get it and read as soon as he could see in the morning.

This book met with a sad mishap. One night it rained and the water ran down over the logs and plaster and wet the book. The leaves were stained and loose and the cover warped. Abe thought it was spoiled. He felt so badly that he nearly cried; but he carried the book to the owner and told him how it happened. Abe wanted to pay for it but had no money. What could he do? Could he work for the man? He would do anything.

"Can you cut up corn, Abe?" "Yes, sir!" "You are a good boy, Abe, and I will not be hard on you. You work for me three days and I will be satisfied."

"The book will be mine then?" "Yes."

Abe worked hard for three days and then owned the book. It was the first book he ever bought, and it was the proudest day of his life. He had paid for it by hard work and it was his own. The book was soiled and some leaves were gone; but it was a treasure. It was a "Life of Washington," and Abe read it

again and again. It fired the heart of the boy. Could other boys be good and great like Washington?

Many years afterward Abraham Lincoln said, "That book helped to make me President."

No boy had a poorer chance or worked harder for an education.

He read all sorts of books and did all kinds of work. He was ferry man on the river, and went once as bow-hand on a flat boat to New Orleans. He was postmaster for a time; he studied surveying and measured old farms and straightened old roads. He studied law and walked fifteen miles to the Boonville court-house to hear the lawyers plead their cases. Afterwards he repeated what he had heard and often improved it in the telling.

But life in Indiana had not proved the easy thing that Thomas Lincoln had expected. So he decided to move again. This time they went to Illinois.

They put their goods in an ox-cart and started on their long journey. The mother and girls rode in the cart, but Abraham Lincoln trudged along the road through the mud guiding the oxen.

He was twenty one years old, tall and lank, but sturdy and muscular. No one could outdo him in running or wrestling.

Everyone liked him and gave him a good word for he was always kind and obliging.

When in 1832 the Indians attacked the scattered settlements on the frontiers of Illinois, Lincoln enlisted as a soldier. His old neighbors chose him captain of the company, and he led them during the Black Hawk war. But they did not have a chance to do much real fighting.

About this time he began to make political speeches, and became a popular stump orator.

He had great power with the common people. They began to say: "Lincoln will be a great man. He is honest, and we can trust him."

A great and perplexing question had arisen in our land, and the people were looking for the best and wisest leader. Some said, "Abraham Lincoln is the man."

He was chosen President. His duties were new and difficult; no one ever had harder problems to solve and more terrible events to meet.

They nearly crushed the strong and wise Lincoln; but he was patient, kindhearted, unselfish, simple and true through it all.

He was one of the best and wisest Presidents our country ever had, and when he was killed in 1865, no one was ever more deeply mourned.

He was a poor boy and never went to school a year in his life, but he worked hard to get an education. He had to borrow his school books and sometimes to copy them, but he never grew discouraged and gave up trying.

He wrote with great care and became a beautiful penman. A boy once wanted Lincoln to set a copy for him in his writing book. Abraham Lincoln set this copy:

“Good boys who to their books apply,
Will all be great men by and by.”

Never forget how Abraham Lincoln studied and worked to become such a great and good man.

Abraham Lincoln and George Washington are our greatest Americans.

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